

**Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council**  
**April 3 & 4, 2007**

**Members Present:** Sandra Morris, Shelly Meyer, Lynn Fawcett, Connie Sturgis, Jeanette Hall, Shelly Fisher, Libby Hancock, Terry Minnow, Roy Kemp, Becky Fleming-Siebenaler, Julia Coyne, Linda Tracy, Dale Mahugh, Doris Running Crane, Jeanne Christopher, Joelfre Grant (for Cindy O'Dell), Teri O'Connell, Kelly Rosenleaf, Barb Perzinski, Susan Kidd, Sheilah Mevis, Mary Jane Standaert

**Staff:** Jamie Palagi, Anne Carpenter, Chris Hettinger, Lisa Murphy, Melody Olson, Patti Russ, Angi Rayfield

**Guests:** Christy Hill-Larson, Hank Hudson, Pam Smith, Pat Knoepke, Ann Klaas, DeeAnn Hartman, Marla Knopfle

**General Announcement:** Sandra Morris was kind enough to fill in and chair the meeting. Kate Ord resigned as council chair, because of her new job and travel schedule. Therefore the council needed to select a chair person and vice chair at this meeting.

**New member orientation - Patti Russ**

Patti welcomed the council members and expressed the Department's gratitude for the patience they showed during the membership appointment process. The Governor's office articulated their need to be directly involved in the selection and appointment of individuals to a variety of councils, not just the MECAC. They want to assure that Montanan's from many geographical locations as well as those with the pertinent expertise have the ability to serve, and that the councils they serve on are valuable to the state. We are excited that Governor Schweitzer has taken such a keen interest and leadership role in supporting early childhood. We have been able to work out a more efficient appointment process and are confident that things will proceed much more smoothly next year.

Patti also provided an overview of the new notebooks that each member received. This included information on mission and guiding principles, and an introduction to consensus decision making. She also provided an overview of the work and membership of each of the council's committees – Quality Committee, Program Policy Committee and Public Policy Committee.

- The Quality Committee works on quality improvement programs and enhancing quality in day cares. They help design, evaluate and recommend improvements in child care.
- The Program Policy committee focuses on policies surrounding the child care scholarship program. They are also involved in identifying and reviewing proposed changes to the ARM. Currently they are working on changing from daily to monthly rate. Also taking on some work of the CACFP.

- The Public Policy committee deals with a broad scoop of child care policy and other programs funded with federal money in addition to the CCDF. They are currently working on the public process required for submission of the state plan.

The following chart represents suggested committee make-up. This configuration should result in the correct voices being heard so that high quality decisions and recommendations can be made.

| <u>Quality</u>   | <u>Public Policy</u> | <u>Program Policy</u>       |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Head Start       | Head Start           | Child Protective Services   |
| Disability       | MTCCA                | WoRC                        |
| Higher Ed        | MTAEOYC              | TANF                        |
| Tribal           | Tribal*              | Tribal*                     |
| CCR&R            | WEEL                 | CCR&R Director & adhoc user |
| Licensing        | Licensing            | Licensing as needed         |
| Provider         | CCR&R network        | Provider                    |
| CACFP            | OPI                  | CACFP                       |
| Parent           | MEA/MFT              | Parent on subsidy           |
| Elected Official | Elected Official     | Low-income advocate         |
|                  | Business             | Business                    |

### **New Member Orientation - Notebook and Sections**

*Agenda:* Jamie shared that anyone can put items on the agenda; it is important that the council members drive the meeting and help guide the direction of work within the Department. Each committee will need to elect a new chair, preferably a person who is not a state employee.

*Guidance for Members on speaking to the legislature.* Included in the book is a copy of a memo from Joan Miles, regarding the appropriate interaction of council members with the legislature. Director Miles asks that when council members are addressing the legislature, that they identify themselves as representing the organization they represent on the MECAC not as representing the MECAC. It is OK to say they serve on the MECAC.

### *Executive Order for Enactment of the MECAC:*

The governor's office signed an executive order so that the MECAC is operating in accordance with the laws of the state. The appointment process was discussed. The Governor is interested in knowing who is on the council; he is interested in assuring that membership is geographically dispersed; and his office wants to review all applications. Jamie Palagi added, it is likely that some advisory councils will not continue. It is important to maintain close contact with the Governor's office with regard to the work and effectiveness of the MECAC.

Comments: Roy Kemp asked if we needed to make a bylaw change in order to request two legislative representatives are on the council. Patti explained that it will require a state plan change.

There was additional discussion regarding membership, including the approval process with the Governor's office; early termination and replacement; substitute/alternate representatives. Each committee agreed to discuss these items and come back with recommendations.

*There were handouts on:*

- MECAC Organization,
- Mission Statement
  - There was a discussion on the reason each person is here on this council.
- Office and Duty Descriptions.
  - Each committee has a staff person and a committee chair.
  - The staff member's role is to serve the council members. Finalize minutes, arrange for meeting space, prepare, requested reports, briefings, etc.

*Structure of Formal Consensus:* Patti informed the group that the MECAC operates using a system of Formal Consensus. Consensus is different from majority rule and voting. It is important that each and every person in the group speak up and share their thoughts on the topic at hand. Individuals are selected to sit on this council specifically because of their expertise. Everyone's insight is vital for quality decision making.

When operating in a consensus mode, one important concept to embrace is that conflict is good. Conflict allows issues to be openly discussed and to have all aspects of a particular issue examined. It is important to agree to disagree while remaining respectful of differing opinions.

The council operates within a set of guiding principles. It is possible for one person to block consensus. If block is not in accordance with the guiding principles, the remainder of the council can override the block. It is important not to become possessive about ideas. The consensus process will provide an environment for improvement on all ideas because of the collective wisdom of the group.

There are a few common rules that make the process go smoothly. These are printed on the backs of everyone's name cards.

*Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) 101- handout*

The Child Care and Development Fund is comprised of 3 distinct funding streams that blend state and federal dollars. The handout explains the unique requirements associated with each funding stream.

### **Consensus Decision**

Roy Kemp proposed to make a standing change to the agenda to allow public comment at the following times:

1. Before lunch on the first day;
2. At the end of the first day before adjournment; and
3. At the end of the second day before adjournment.

**There was consensus. The minutes and future agendas shall reflect this change.**

### **Nominating Committee**

A nominating committee consisting of Connie Sturgis, Barb Perzinski, and Libby Hancock was selected to gather names for a new chair and co-chair. The council needed to fill Kate Ord's remaining term and select a co-chair who will move into the chair's position next year.

The council requested that the wording be changed in describing the duties of chair and co-chair, to reflect that this as a 2 year commitment.

### **Public Comment**

No public comment at this time.

### **Provider Story**

Brenda Kjorstad, a family child care provider from Helena shared her experiences with the state's Best Beginnings programs. The name of her facility is Kids Kount Day Care. Brenda has utilized several Best Beginnings programs to improve the quality of her facility.

- She received a mini grant and Infant Toddler Mini grant for fencing and an egress window;
- She is currently applying for both grants again so she may purchase obtain playground equipment;
- She has utilized the Merit Pay programs to further her early childhood education;
- She became Infant/Toddler Certified and qualified to participate in the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver program;
- She is planning to continue her education, taking a college courses while participating in the Montana Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program (MECAP). She will apply for Higher Ed Merit Pay to support her continuing education; and
- She is involved in a mentoring program.

Brenda stated that the Best Beginnings programs helped her provide better service to the children in her care. Her advice to the council was to do a better job at getting the word out about all the scholarships and grants.

**Hank Hudson, Administrator Human and Community Services Division**

Mr. Hudson welcomed everybody and thanked them for coming. He shared that that this is a council that has traditionally been very influential. Advice from the MECAC generally goes on to become the law of the land more often than not.

Mr. Hudson is the Administrator of the Human and Community Services Division (HCSD). This division deals with issues and programs serving low income individuals. The programs housed within the HCSD are TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid Eligibility, commodities, the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP), the county public assistance offices, the Early Childhood Services Bureau, (Child Care, Head Start-State collaboration, the Child and Adult Care Food Program).

He recognized additional tribal representation and stated that he hoped the MECAC would provide an opportunity for improvement in state-tribal collaboration. He said we are leaving the period where money wasn't too big of an issue. We have had a fairly extended period of time where we could accomplish what we wanted to do. He feels that this period may be coming to an end. His priority was to make sure we kept up with the 150% of poverty eligibility level for families and that we would continue to provide the as many child care scholarships as possible. It is desirable to maintain the reimbursement rate at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of an annual market rate survey. This helps to maintain both quality of care and accessibility for families. It is also important to give early childhood professionals the opportunity to access the quality enhancement programs that would help them, since low pay is an issue. Legislatively, we have asked for \$4 million more in funds to keep up with our goals, and so far so good.

Hank noticed that the concept of a more formal early childhood community is taking hold. Early Childhood professionals are beginning to be valued as educators of young children. A related topic is that the Governor is planning to announce the formation of a Family Economic Assistance Council that will be based in the Dept of Commerce. This is important to early childhood because the industry is beginning to be seen as an important economic sector and part of the state's infrastructure.

*Mr. Hudson provided the following legislative overview.*

- The HCSD has requested that the legislature, add 4.2 million dollars to support the goals of maintaining eligibility at 150% of poverty and being able to support the market rate at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- House Bill 120 is a clean-up bill that allows different inspections for facilities with extended registrations/licensed. It also strikes the word daily from the section of the law that pertains to rate setting, thus allowing for different payment rate types (daily, hourly, monthly, weekly, etc). This bill has passed the house and Senate with one minor amendment and is on its way to the Governor's desk.
- There is a TANF proposal that sets aside some funds for grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren, to help pay for child care costs.

- Hank deferred to Jamie Palagi to talk about child protective services child care.
- There was some discussion in the legislature about raising the wages for direct care workers, workers in nursing homes, etc. (HB 820). Hank shared why child care is not included with this. The Department has been able to support child care providers better through the market based system than being lumped in with the rest of the provider types. There may come a time when we need to rethink this if the current wage crisis in child care cannot be resolved through a market based system.
- Funding for a redesign of the TEAMS System is in the works.
- The State earned income tax credit is still going through.
- One of the After School bills has gone down, one is still alive.
- Full time Kindergarten still in process of going through.

Senator Roy Brown approached Roy Kemp about the economic impact of the infant ratios on child care businesses. The message to the Department was to either change the rules or he would introduce a bill to the legislature to change infant ratios (create a toddler category with different ratios) to make these types of programs more viable. It is likely that the infant program rules will be opened up for a change after the session. Quality Assurance Division, the Early Childhood Services Bureau and, the Early Childhood Project have scheduled a meeting to review the Infant/Toddler work plan; begin the process of writing Infant/Toddler “*Early Learning Guidelines*”; and begin exploring effective ways to look at these ratios, in ways that do not compromise the health and safety of infants in care. **An update on this issue will be reported on at the next MECAC.**

### **Montana Advocates for Children (MAC)**

The MAC coalition consists of four early childhood professional associations: the Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the Head Start Association, the Montana Child Care Association and the Montana Association for the Education of Young Children. They hire a lobbyist to push forward legislative agenda items that they would like to see in accomplished in the state.

Data Reports were provided for each county, along with some information about after school. .

### **Child Protective Services (CPS) Child Care**

We are working on a Memorandum of Understanding between with Child and Family Services Division and Human and Community Services Division regarding the administration of CPS child care assistance. The ECSB will be managing these funds through the CCUBS system. This will eliminate the switch that occurs on a yearly basis and make the billing and administration conundrum invisible to providers serving children who need child care because of CPS issues.

### **Head Start-State Collaboration**

Mary Jane Standaert reported on the activities of the Head Start – State Collaboration office and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant. The MECAC is tasked with providing advice to both of these projects.

Mary Jane handed out copies of the 2006 Governor's Summit on School Readiness in Montana, put together by the Washington Foundation. There is contact information on the back if anyone needs it. She also passed out a summary of the community teams and their local work.

Mary Jane explained that Daphne Herling from U of M will be the evaluator for both grants. Daphne will be working on integrating the goals of both grants over the next two years. The School Readiness effort is guided by a School Readiness task force.

Other projects that are currently in the works include:

- The ABCD Grant with Medicaid to establish universal medical screening for all young children. This is a technical assistance grant focused on improving current practice.
- A Professional Development Grant focused on Inclusion.
- Developing a plan for the use of a \$100,000 dollars donation that was given to the Head Start-State Collaboration project. The donor wanted to give money to support a worthy cause in Montana. The ECCS project caught his attention and it was decided that Child Care Partnerships would be the recipient. There is no time limit to expend the money. It will be used to help build the Early Childhood Consultation System.

### **Update on outstanding MECAC recommendations – Jamie Palagi**

Jamie informed the council that the ECSB decision regarding the discrepancy between the payment for Infant Toddler Merit Pay and for the 50-hour Track 1 Merit Pay will be equalized at \$500.

The recommendation to implement a disregard for child support paid from a family will be put on hold until a new fiscal evaluation can be completed. Anne Carpenter is working on this with the CCR&R agencies. This change will not take place until that is complete and SFY 2008 has started.

### **Sixteen year olds working in group and family homes.**

Jamie Palagi asked that the council take up the topic of sixteen year olds possibly working in group and family homes. Representative Julie Finch and Rick Thompson approached Jamie about this idea. The suggestion was to discuss enacting a rule allowing 16 year olds to work in group and family homes and be counted in the facility ratio. Becky wanted to add a discussion on potential ways to qualify primary caregivers in a shorter period of time. There is currently a crisis in retaining qualified care giving staff. Rural based centers are finding it

extremely difficult hire and retain qualified help. This would be both a Quality (Training) and Program Policy (Licensing) Committee issue.

### **School Readiness Public Engagement Campaign Material:**

Patti Russ and Jamie Palagi shared the TV commercials and new brochure that will be coming out regarding School Readiness.

### **State Plan**

Patti handed out the draft copy of the 2008-2009 state plan. Each committee was assigned a section to review within the next two weeks. The ECSB will schedule a conference call with Karen Knoll-Moran, the Region VIII Federal program manager to identify potential problem areas before submission. [This has been scheduled for April 23, 2007]. The committee assignments are as follows:

**Section 3 - Program Policy Committee to review**

**Section 2 and 4 - Public Policy Committee to review**

**Section 5 and 7 – Quality Section**

It is important to note that this is a rough draft. Patti will e-mail the plan to all council members. Melody will create a **MECAC List Serv** for convenience in discussion and commenting. The comments are due to the ECSB by April 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Chair and Co-Chair**

Chair nominations – Cindy O'Dell agreed to be the chair for Kate Ord's remaining term. Dale Mahugh has agreed to be the co-chair. There was a consensus. Committee Chairs will be selected in committee meetings.

### **Next Meeting Dates**

May 21<sup>st</sup> for the State Plan Hearing – [Note date change].

September 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>

November 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>

### **Public Comment**

Dale Mahugh announced that there will be an Economic Development Conference in Butte April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup>. Given the emphasis on the importance of the child care industry to economic development, it would be a great conference to attend.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Kelly Rosenleaf – Quality Committee**

Discussion items include the following. See Quality Committee notes for detail.



1. If a provider takes an Infant Toddler course of study that is part of a degree program, they may apply for Higher Ed. Merit Pay.
2. Informal CDA Training.
3. 16 years olds counted in ratios. Becky will do some research into legal issues in regards to this. There is a question as to the possibility of getting a juvenile background check. There are also insurance concerns.
4. Definition of primary caregivers and a potential proposal to change the requirement from two years experience to intensive training.
5. Early Learning Guidelines update. There are not very many left and what is left is already spoken for. The ELGs are posted on the Early Childhood Project's website; work is currently being done to get the parent companion online.
6. More formal guidance for Mentor programs.
7. Looking into employee labor issues
8. The addition of a 2nd legislative representative
9. A discussion of members having official alternates. Will this create an issue in the governor's office since alternates would have to be appointed?
10. There is interest in expanding "*Touch Points*" throughout the state. The Quality committee will have a telephone conference call to discuss this further.
11. State Plan – members will review and send comments to Patti.

#### **Consensus Decision Item. .**

*Merit Pay.* The Quality Committee made the following recommendations regarding the 23-hour Track and 50-hour Track. The goal is to improve quality of training through a comprehensive plan.

- **Track 1.** In the 23-hour track, there will be a requirement that a participant needs to take at least one course that is 5 hours in duration or greater. The training plan needs to include at least 3 or more knowledge base areas.
  - o There is a maximum of 10 hours that may be done in distance learning. Unless it is offered by a regionally accredited higher education institution.
- **Track 2.** In the 50-hour track, there will be a requirement that a participant needs to take at least two courses that are five hours in duration or greater. The training plan needs to include at least four knowledge base areas.
  - o No more than 10 hours can be in distance learning. Unless it is offered by a regionally accredited higher education institution. 10 hours of training in duration.

#### *Discussion and concerns*

- There was a concern about the availability of 5 hour courses in smaller CCR&R regions. The CCR&R representatives on the council did not see this as a problem as long as the 5 hour courses do not have to be offered

in one 5 hour session. If they are able to do one half of a course on one night and the second half of the course another, this should be doable.

### **Consensus was achieved on the Merit Pay recommendations.**

#### **Connie Sturgis – Program Policy**

Discussion items include the following. See Program Policy Committee notes for detail.

1. Overview of Oklahoma and Kansas payment system
2. Back Ground Checks for LUP/LUI. There is a question as to whether or not to align the LUP/LUI background check process with the evaluation process used by QAD.
3. Substitute for council members. Each member should select their own substitute if they could not attend.
4. There should be two legislative representatives on the council.

#### **Consensus Decision Items**

##### **1. Monthly Rate**

- The program policy committee was informed that it was likely HB 120 would pass. The legislation strikes the work “daily” from the law. This clears the way to move forward on the implementation of a monthly rate reimbursement system. .

**Recommendation:** To pilot a 6-month, monthly rate project with Star facilities. The pilot will include collecting data and analyzing the costs paid out with these facilities versus what would have been paid from a daily or hourly rate in order to assess cost neutrality.

**Consensus was achieved to proceed with a monthly rate pilot project.**

##### **2. Child Support participation requirement for young parents under the age of 18.**

- A parent under 18 would not have to apply for child support. Child Support Enforcement Division does not want minors under 18 applying for child support because they cannot have a legal contract with a minor.
- Compliance and cooperation with child support as terms used for child care eligibility determination need clear definitions.

**Recommendation:** Include these items in the next rule process.

**Consensus was achieved to proceed with these changes to the rule.**

##### **3. The program policy committee is reviewing the proposed federal regulations regarding Improper Payments and the “Error Rate Methodology”. Formal comments would come from the MECAC.**

**Recommendation:** The program policy committee will draft a response to the rule on behalf of the MECAC

**Consensus was achieved to draft the letter on behalf of the MECAC**

### **Jeanette Hall – Public Policy**

Discussion items include the following. See Public Policy Committee notes for detail.

1. The Health Care Representative on the council. The public policy committee believes that this does not have to be a physician. May be an RN?
2. Each member should to identify their own alternate. Does this need to be formal, informal?
3. Committee and council chair should have a conference call to discuss alternates and vacancies.
4. Replace parent representative with business partner and pay the persons wages for the day.
5. Include information about MECAC in packet that goes out for nominations. [This is current practice]

### **Consensus Decision Items**

1. Discussed states public education campaign around school readiness and the importance of bringing the school readiness campaign to a broader audience. CCR&R agencies are in a position to include “*School Readiness*” in their training calendars. The concept of the “Ready Formula” could then be brought to providers.

**Recommendation:** CCR&R’s should receive training and resources surrounding the topic of “School Readiness” so that they in turn could create School Readiness trainings. An informational piece should be developed and presented at a CCR&R training meeting. [The best entities to develop this material would be the ECSB and the HSSC office]

**Consensus was achieved.**

2. **Full Day Kindergarten:** There occurs an intersection between the mission of child care and the mission of the school system. There are financial and systematic implications for the child care system. What will happen to children in full time kindergarten, on days out and before and after school? It is likely that slots that were previously held for kindergartners would no longer be there.

**Recommendation:** The Public Policy committee would draft an “Issue Paper” on behalf of the MECAC, with regard to full day kindergarten and how it will affect the child care community. The opinion would come from MECAC.

**This item was continued without consensus.**

3. There is a need for two legislative representatives on MECAC. ***All three committees came to the same conclusion.***

**Recommendation:** Change the state plan to allow two legislative representatives on the MECAC.

**Consensus was achieved.**

4. Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the year, outgoing and incoming chairs should look at MECAC appointments and appoint members to certain committees, taking into account committee needs. This is a recommendation to the full council.

**This item was continued without consensus.**